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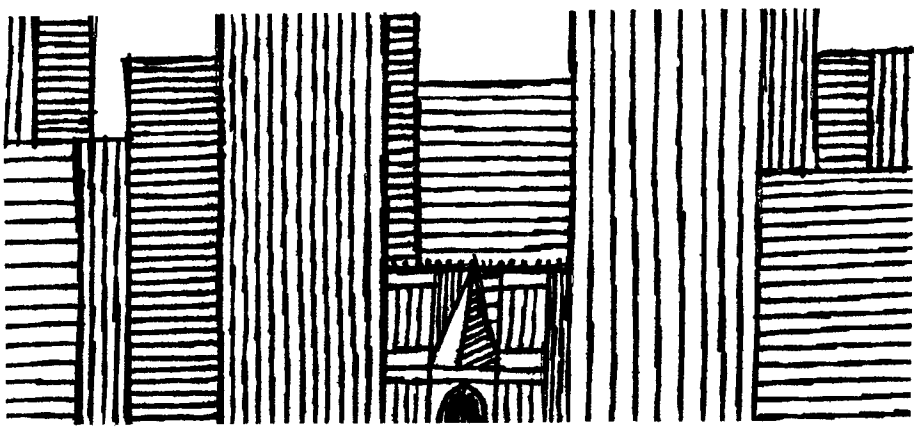

BEYOND BONHOEFFER?

Harvey Cox

THE SECULAR CITY

Daniel Callahan

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Dangerous Departures?

Dayton, Ohio

To the Editors: Your liturgical issue of August 20 certainly marked a few new departures in matters liturgical, if also an indication of the danger involved in making such departures.

Father John Ryan's article, "Post-Tribal Worship," may be taken as a case in point. I for one enthusiastically welcome the sort of criticism which Father Ryan offers—instead of grounding the standards for liturgy strictly in sacramental theology or in the liturgy of the Patristic era, we should evaluate the liturgical actions and symbols in terms of contemporary modes of thought.

No doubt a good many prayers and actions of the Mass (not least the Canon) need revision, drastic revision, if they are to bear meaning for today's Christian. And the creative, active element of worship surely needs an emphasis it has not received in the history of the Mass.

But there can be a trap in speaking this way, and at moments Father Ryan falls into the trap. His generalizations about the liturgical community as lacking in inner differentiation and today's "Age of the Person" have a great deal of truth, and need to be thought through in relation to the entire liturgical formulary; but Father Ryan presents these ideas so hastily and with such an assurance of their validity that they are not likely to be convincing to anyone apart from those who agree with such statements in the very first place.

This is precisely the trap: by generalizing hastily and by failing to make the many tedious but necessary qualifications, Father Ryan loses the import, and the impact, of what he is saying. This is the fate of so much contemporary Protestant liberal theology; and I consider it a shame, that so much excellent criticism will remain impotent, because it lacks this maturity.

Father Ryan nevertheless has contributed a significant article, and I hope his voice is heard, and somehow taken seriously, by our liturgical reformers.

(BRO.) WILLIAM KUHNS, S.M.

Dismay and Alarm

Toledo, Ohio

To the Editors: With genuine dismay I have just read Father John J. Ryan's shrill cry of discontent about the present state of liturgical reform. It is my impression that we, the Church, are entered upon a transitional period, that more changes are called for, and are to come. What directions they should take, what new realizations they should reflect, do not seem to me nearly so clear as Father Ryan apparently thinks.

Indeed, it is because the reform of the liturgy and the prospect of creative changes yet to come seem to me so vital, that the appearance of an article like Father Ryan's—which strikes me as glib, and hasty, and superficial—in a magazine of COMMONWEAL's stature is disconcerting.

Hannah Arendt has pointed out that ever since Roman times, social order has rested on three bases, tradition, religion, and authority. One cannot pull any of these three out from under, she argues persuasively, without bringing down the other two, and with them the whole structure. Luther rejected authority, and to his horror lived to see tradition and religion, which he valued profoundly, picked apart to furnish building stones for a variety of Erastian establishments. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment found no room for religion in their brave new world, and were dismayed when tradition and authority, which they esteemed, washed away in the blood of the Revolution. Hobbes had no use for tradition, and in wrecking it brought down religion and authority along with it; totalitarians have no use for the first, and cannot even appreciate the other.

Many of the noisier, less sensitive enthusiasts for liturgical reform, I believe, are making Hobbes' mistake. Every parish priest who is in touch with his people these days has at times sensed, I am sure, cracks appearing in their faith and in their acceptance of the guidance of the Church—perhaps even in his own.

Not only Father Ryan, but the whole thinking world will need much more time than we have yet had to absorb and evaluate existentialism and the great world-vision of Teilhard de Chardin. Each generation stands on the shoulders of the past, and the past, burdensome though it be, and dangerous in the wrong hands, is nonetheless essential to the present.

It is this, I think, that most disturbs me about Father Ryan's piece: he speaks as if the fuller discovery of the person, the realization of new dimensions in the concept of community, make the past irrelevant to us except perhaps as a collection of relics by which to measure how far we have come. He not only wants to build churches of contemporary design — which is laudable—but he also wants to blow up Chartres and Bourges and Rheims—which is not.

Again, the "historical moment" of which he speaks is, as I understand it, a cumulative reality, carrying with it the substance of the past through the present and on into the future. It seems that what Father Ryan calls, "provisionally," the "Age of the Person" he might better term "the age of the subjective" —a phenomenon which began to be apparent in the West roughly four hundred years ago — for emphasis on the human person as a unique reality (apart from the individual's awareness of his own being) is precisely one of the characteristics of Christianity by contrast with the impersonal and nationalistic ("tribal," perhaps?) mood found widely in earlier religious belief.

In the growing awareness of the subjective, the objective aspects of man's being ought not be obliterated; in reality, they are complemented. It appears to be true that the common failing of much pre-Renaissance religious life was formalism, or ritualism, an inability to appreciate fully the role of the subjective—of commitment, of interior struggle, of personal aspiration — without which formal public worship was hol-

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low. The balance began to be righted, markedly, in the seventeenth century, and even earlier, if you set St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross in context. That we have come to appreciate this hardly implies the discard of that side of the spiritual life which engages the individual not by that which is unique in him, but by that which he shares in common with all his brothers; this is the role of the liturgy.

Man is indeed an autonomous individual, a little world in himself, as Aristotle pointed out; at the same time, he is a unit in a social whole without which he cannot exist or be realistically conceived. The child, as a distinctive human person, has a relationship all his own with each of his parents; but he has this relationship precisely because he is their child; he receives it only in and through the family. And while there must be frequent, intimate communication between them if parent and child are not to be cruelly impoverished, the family meal about the common table is not the time to pursue it. In this sense, it is hard to see why Father Ryan finds the present liturgy so inadequate for twentieth-century man. Granted that we today are more than ever aware of our personal relationship with God, which implies a more acute awareness of the responsibility we have, personally, to Him; we are no less for that members of His family, having this unity to celebrate, too, with one another and with Him. This is the liturgy.

One of the happy aspects of the liturgy, which the reforms accomplished thus far set in relief by contrast with the Mass as it was a mere ten years ago is the opportunity it affords for spontaneous or at least freer expression within the framework of the rite. A good deal of attention has been paid to the significance of the offertory as a place for the offering, through Christ, of that which is most personal in those who offer the Mass, and the spirit of the prayers of the faithful, of an offertory procession, of the extemporaneous homily that sets the stage for all this is a case in point.

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THE NEGRO FAMILY

The Labor Department's Office of Policy Planning and Research has produced a significant study entitled "The Negro family." President Johnson made use of it in his brilliant speech at Howard University. Theodore White used it in preparing his absorbing section on the Negro revolution in his book. *The Making of the President, 1964.* And *New Republic* columnist T.R.B. was very plainly referring to it when he suggested that the civil rights problem will not be solved without considering the uncomfortable facts about the Negro family.

The facts are uncomfortable because they can be used by racists to suggest the basic inferiority of the Negro and his inability to build a firm family foundation. For this reason, although the general situation is well known, liberal analysts have often seemed reluctant to go into detail for fear of supplying ammunition to racists and of seeming to call unnecessary attention to Negro family weaknesses. T.R.B.'s analysis, for instance, was prefaced with what seemed to be an anguished apology for bringing the subject up at all.

But the thesis of Office of Policy Planning and Research is that the full glare of national attention is absolutely essential. It says flatly that the deterioration of the Negro family "is the fundamental source of weakness of the Negro community at the present time," and argues that Negro equality will not come about until this fact is faced. Here are some of the statistical findings, based on 1960 figures:

- Nearly a quarter of urban Negro marriages are dissolved.
- Nearly a quarter of all Negro births are now illegitimate; the non-white illegitimacy ratio is eight times the white ratio.
- In central Harlem an estimated 43 percent of all live births are illegitimate.
- One third of all non-white children live in broken homes. Three million children are now under the Aid to Dependent Children program,

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two thirds of them because of absent but living fathers. The figure is climbing rapidly.

The figures are bad enough, but the trend is worse. "The family structure of lower class Negroes," says the report, "is highly unstable, and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown." In general, the Negro family is dangerously prone to divorce, separation and parental abandonment. This instability becomes the legacy of the children, only a small percentage of whom reach the age of 18 having lived all their lives with both parents.

The social roots of the problem are obvious enough. The Negro family structure was systematically destroyed by more than two hundred years of slavery, which, unlike the pattern of slavery in South America, allowed no vestige of family rights or responsibility. In the century since the end of slavery, white pressures have persistently denied the conditions necessary to a sound family structure. Events worked against the emergence of a strong father figure in the Negro family, and the debasement of the Negro male as breadwinner helped make many Negro families virtual matriarchies.

The statistics marshalled in the report, along with a telling commentary, are meant as a call for national action. The implicit assumption of many important leaders, in and out of government, is that with full legal equality nearly achieved, the civil rights problem is well on its way to being solved. But with an emerging generation of Negroes becoming entangled in the pathological pattern of family life, this may be a dangerous assumption.

AMERICA AT WAR

As Americans we pride ourselves on being a pragmatic people. This is sophistication of a sort, but the sort that can sometimes lead us to say, as one American mother did recently, that "We should use our bombs instead of sending our boys to fight in a dirty jungle."

Vietnam is a dirty, ugly war, and we don't always have to go there to see it plainly. It is unedifying enough to watch daily as Americans count the costs of the Vietnam war with the nimbleness and self-absorbtion of a land speculator. Yet it is not all that surprising, for when there is deep doubt about the wisdom and justice of a war, as there unquestionably is in America about Vietnam, and no corresponding willingness to examine it critically, then the only resort is to a sort of backdoor sophistication. If our costs in Vietnam could be limited to arms and materiel, the war presumably could continue indefinitely without arousing protest in the United States. We might not even know a war was going on.

It is no fault of our leaders that this is not the case, as it was in Guatemala, Iran, Cuba, and heaven knows where else. Reluctantly, President Johnson doubled the draft call. Many expected the National Guard to be activated as well, and it may yet be. We don't know.

What we do know, however, is that a domestic political confrontation directly relating to Vietnam has been put off for awhile. Selective Service at present affects only those too unorganized or uninfluential to beat the draft. This means school dropouts, racial minorities and those at the bottom of the social and economic scale. In fact, doubling the draft might almost be welcomed by the country as a supplement to the war on poverty. There will be no questions asked in any case.

But will there be questions about Vietnam ever? Must we wait until our involvement is so deep that the national honor is at stake? When that happens there will be no questions at all, National Guard or not.

In the meantime, we might ask whom the war is benefiting. According to the London *Economist,* U.S. corporate profits are up, instead of down as expected, unemployment is down, and the U.S. balance of payments showed a surplus in the second quarter of this year for the first time since 1957. "Most important," it reported, "the increase in government spending necessitated by the intensification of the war in Vietnam makes it just about certain that the boom will not level off early in 1966 as had been feared. This fear accounted for the sharp fall on the stock market in June."

Sound nasty? Well war profits are always a nasty aspect of national honor. More important, they tend to muffle criticism that otherwise might be heard. Up to now, the Vietnam war has benefited much that is worst in America, the ugliness of a war economy for one thing, but much worse, the ugliness of people who would kill without risk. Only a state executioner claims that privilege.

MORAL FOR A SUMMER

Since every summer has a moral, our editorial conscience tells us we'd better find one for the glorious days just past. Moral hunting is a tricky business, though. The obvious place to look is in the arena of human folly. Plenty of action there this summer. India's American planes began shooting up Pakistan's American tanks. Not bad. General Ky came to power in

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South Vietnam promising to exterminate anyone who impeded the quest for a humane society. Hitler, he said, is his hero. Not bad either. Lyndon Baines Johnson sent a division of troops to Santo Domingo to keep the Dominican Republic safe for military juntas. If you send enough troops, you can foul up any situation.

But why concentrate on international folly? A good question. We're a patriotic, fun-loving nation; that's what makes us go. The corset manufacturers know this. They used the summer to promote their jingoistic pop art, giving the American flag the kind of attention it has needed for a long time now. But if we settle on that breakthrough as the paradigm case of Summer '65, we're likely to get the good matrons of the D.A.R. mad at us. They protested the corsets, and they're in a far better position than we to pass judgments.

Anyway, we'd get protests from the N.C.A.A. and the A.A.U. as well. They've had a good fight going this summer and their virile instincts won't stand much upstaging by corset manufacturers and D.A.R. ladies. What they're bloodying each other about, you see, is this: can an N.C.A.A. athlete who enters an A.A.U. track meet without permission continue to date girls who wear leather boots? No, that doesn't sound right. . . . We've gotten our sports and fashion notes confused here. . . . Oh yes, here we are: Can girls who wear leather boots have spikes put into them in order to run in unsanctioned A.A.U. cross-country championships? Anyhow, the battle was something to watch.

Yet if we choose a moral from the mouse-pit of national affairs, some of our readers will never forgive us. They'll say we advertise ourselves as a "journal of opinion edited by Catholic laymen" (etc. etc.) and that we'd better pick our morals from the groves of the sacral. But that really puts us on the spot. Let's say we decided to choose the entrance of Archbishop Cody into Chicago as *the event* of Summer '65. If we did, however, we'd be forced to say something about the elaborate fanfare, the big color photos ("suitable for framing"), the well-publicized anecdotes from an episcopal childhood—and so on—which marked his arrival. Well you know what would happen next. There'd be angry editorials in the Pleasantville *Catholic Truth Sentinel* about "irreverence" and "disrespect for authority." And while we were getting kicked from that direction, *Ramparts* magazine and various new breed prophets would blast us for "not going far enough."

More promising is the dispute between *America* and the *Christian Century;* that has enough symbols to fill a Nabokov novel. *America* seemed to hint that a papal visit to the U.N. would help further the cause of an American diplomatic representative at the Vatican. (As anachronisms go it is a good cause.) This shocked *The Christian Century.* In the tradition of nineteenth-century polemic, they are against such a departure from the American Way. U.N., si; diplomatic shenanigans, no. The only trouble here, though, is that we'd get both magazines incensed at us: we'd have to say they are both wrong.

As we said, moral hunting is a tricky business.

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COUNCIL REVERBERATIONS

SCHISM IN FRANCE?

Paris

Is there a threat of schism in the Church in France? Earlier this summer Monsignor Pailler, co-adjutor Bishop of Rouen, declared that there was: "I do not believe I am pessimistic in saying that it is something to be feared by the end of the year and after the promulgation of the texts on religious liberty and of schema 13 (the Church present in the modern world)—it is a schism which, it is true, will reach only a small group."

Coming from a Bishop, this prediction had bomb-like repercussions. Of course it was well-known that small groups of Catholics called "integrists" have been trying by every means to oppose the *aggiornamento* proclaimed by John XXIII. But since these men posed as the defenders of fidelity to tradition, the possibility that they could ever separate themselves from Rome seemed most remote.

Without doubt the Bishop of Rouen knows his diocese well. And the difficulties which the work of the Council has created for many traditionalist Catholics could lead some of them to revolts comparable to those which shook French Catholicism when Rome condemned *l'Action Francaise.* A schism, however, would be an out-and-out refusal—by groups organized and surrounded by clerics—to recognize the spiritual authority of the Roman See. What is the situation?

In the first place, it is very likely the Bishop has been overly impressed by the tactics of some of the rebels. In the words of a priest from the workers' suburbs, "the integrists are after all very few, but each one makes

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enough commotion for a hundred. They utilize the methods of political demonstrators, organizing street protests against certain priest and lay speakers. Their objective—and they attain it—is to get people talking about them. In this way they create the impression that they comprise an important force, which, in fact, they are far from representing."

Recently a bishop had organized a meeting of the pastors in his diocese on the subject of the reception accorded by the faithful to the Council's reforms of the liturgy. He himself had received a hundred letters of protest from people who claimed to speak for many fellow-parishioners distressed by the recent changes. "So, gentlemen," he said to his pastors, "I imagine that you must have many difficulties with the Mass in French?" The priests looked at each other in surprise: there were a few laymen who had asked for some supplementary explanations, but no special difficulty had actually presented itself.

We should not be misled by a few manifestations which were more spectacular than profound. Actually the crisis that has confronted French Catholicism for some time would appear to come from the problems of re-absorbing the Algerian colons into metropolitan France again. Several years ago the situation was more serious. It is notorious that the integrist leaders all contended vigorously for a French Algeria. In 1956-7 groups like the *Cité Catholique* or *Verbe* began propagandizing the army, the judiciary and the police. They hoped that the Algerian war would bring to power a military régime which would not only re-establish the former French empire in North Africa, but also endow France with a Salazar- or Franco-type government.

From the time de Gaulle settled the Algerian problem their influence has not ceased to decline; today they comprise only a few quite limited groups of young nationalistic militants or of those nostalgic for "French grandeur." They are not satisfied with saying that de Gaulle deceived them; they accuse him of being a traitor and harbor a veritable hatred toward him. They reproach him for having liquidated the French empire and also for having legitimized myths of social progress, which seem to them a danger for the French spirit, as well as for having weakened the Western camp by extending a hand of friendship to Moscow and Peking.

School Issue in the Background

But in this political domain their views are far removed from those of the French hierarchy. A number of bishops had in fact been defenders of French Algeria; yet how could their political preferences be stronger than their fidelity to Rome? Moreover, the French clergy today, in harmony with national opinion, is grateful to General de Gaulle for having restored an atmosphere of civil peace in their country. Besides, the Church in France would be very unwise to antagonize the government. Her freedom of action toward the State is restricted by a major problem of hers, the problem of the free school.

Since the separation of Church and State in 1905, French private schools have had no easy time of it. They had to procure their own financial support themselves. The State had taken complete charge of public instruction, under which two-thirds of all French boys and girls were enrolled. Since 1950, however, successive governments have recognized that private institutions perform a public service and on this basis have granted them subventions to the extent that these schools accept a certain control by government inspectors. This system of subventions has been consolidated and improved by the de Gaulle government. It is hard to imagine an opposition movement on the part of the hierarchy against a government which in a single day could cause most of the confessional schools to disappear by suppressing these subventions.

If there is a schism which threatens the Church in France, it is of a sort quite different than that which Bishop Pailler denounced. I mean that which involves tens or hundreds of thousands of the baptized and confirmed every year. They leave the Church on tiptoe, without saying anything, for a thousand and one reasons, of which the principal one is their impression that the Church does not understand their needs, their aspirations—that the religion and teaching they receive is incapable of entering into their life and giving it sufficient nourishment, and that their problems of family, professional, social and political life are not understood. The real danger for the Church in France lies there, as it does for the Church universal: in the silent hemorrhage which has not stopped draining her lifeblood for several centuries.

That is what is dramatically at stake at the present Council. The Church has understood the necessity for adapting herself to the modern world. But she must find her way between two dangers. The first would be to effect such profound and unsettling changes in her structures, her doctrine and her modes of existence as to lose the bulk of her traditional faithful. The second is that by excessive prudence she will discourage all those who press on her threshold yet who will decide to enter only after the structure looks more like an edifice of the 21st Century than a fortress of the Middle Ages.

ROBERT BARRAT

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BEYOND BONHOEFFER?

The Future of Religionless Christianity

HARVEY COX

Recently I was invited to spend several hours with a group of 12 visiting German theologians. They all seemed stunned and disoriented after three weeks in America, bewildered by the confusion of our theological scene. As the meeting started, one of them pleaded with me in a puzzled voice to provide them with a "map of the Protestant theological terrain in America." I told them at once that the situation here was hard to delineate in terms they would understand. I explained that, unlike Germany, we have no relatively homogenous theological community in which movements can be charted and located, where the new school criticizes but builds on the old, where nearly everyone is at least in touch with identifiable mainline currents.

In comparison with Germany, the situation here, I conceded, was chaos. Nevertheless, in response to their insistent urgings, I finally ventured to describe four lines of thought which I took to be significant in American theology today.

First, I mentioned the growing tendency of Catholics and Protestants to read each others' books and journals —not just out of curiosity but to be helped by them. I spoke of the vague beginnings of some ecumenical consensus in theology, well developed in the biblical field, so-so in the field of ethics, still nearly nonexistent in dogmatics. Then I talked about those theologians such as Paul Lehmann, who insist that the traditional boundary between ethics and theology must be dissolved, that theology must assume an ethical idiom, utilizing the tradition to illuminate our multiple crises in race, economics and world revolution. In the third place I described those theologians led by Gibson Winter and Colin Williams, who see the main theological task today in the reconstruction of the shape (morphe) of the church, who use theology to criticize the inherited structures of church life and who wish to re-form the church, as they are apt to say, "around the needs of the world."

Finally, I touched on a group of younger theologians whom Langdon Gilkey and William Hamilton call the "Death of God" theologians, those who, beginning either with linguistic analysis or with some variety of existentialist thought, declare that both the word "God" and the whole concept of transcendence have become empty to modern man, and that we must now re-translate the whole business into a strictly secular frame of reference.

I paused after describing these four fairly amorphous tendencies. One of the German theologians, a Berliner, looked up thoughtfully and said, "But Bonhoeffer was interested in these same things and he's been dead for twenty-years."

Suddenly I realized he was right. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the martyr-theologian of the German resistance—despite the fact that he has become an enigma, a fad, a saint and in some cases an embarrassment in the two decades since his execution by the SS—still had his finger on the very issues which continue to torment us. We must be careful not to tear Bonhoeffer out of his context

HARVEY COX, *author of* The Secular City, *was recently appointed Associate Professor of Church and Society at Harvard Divinity School.*

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and apply his somewhat fragmentary insights in a wholly different setting. All the same, we cannot yet "move beyond" him because we have not yet faced his challenge seriously. His uncanny capacity to uncover the hidden skeletons in the closets of theology and to see issues coming around the corner means that we have not shaken him. It may be embarrassing to assign readings from someone who has already been written up in a photo essay by *Life*, but as one American theologian put it, "We have to continue studying Bonhoeffer even though he is a fad."

The recent publication in English of extended excerpts from Bonhoeffer's early writings, under the title *No Rusty Swords* (Harpers) gives us a new opportunity to assess where we now stand on the issues Bonhoeffer raised and how his astonishing theological intelligence might still help us.

Before returning to the four clusters of theological issues I mentioned to the visitors from Germany, it would be well to remind ourselves again that Bonhoeffer was very German, and that his insights require considerable transliteration before they make such sense in North America. Not only was he a German, he was also an aristocrat, and as the early letters published in *No Rusty Swords* indicate, his theological credentials were impeccable: Berlin under Harnack, Tübingen under Schlatter, a lecturer in theology in Berlin at the astonishing age of 24. His papers reflect a gifted man deeply in touch with the crises of his age, sensitive to the need for self-respect in Germany, terribly suspicious of the way the Nazis had tied national rebirth to neo-paganism.

His year at Union Seminary in New York as a Sloane Fellow in 1930-31 is revealed through letters and notes which give us a glimpse of the strikingly different climate of an American theological institution then. Obviously disturbed, Bonhoeffer wrote in his report: "A seminary in which it can come about that a large number of students laugh out loud in a public lecture at the quoting of a passage from Luther's *De servo arbitrio* on sin and forgiveness because it seems to them to be comic has evidently completely forgotten what Christian theology by its very nature stands for." I doubt if these students, after thirty-five years of rediscovering Reformation theology, would laugh now. But the fact that American and continental theologians labor in very divergent vineyards is just as true today.

Bonhoeffer's vaunted radicalism grew out of a tradition which was so much a part of him he rarely felt the need to affirm it. His genius was that he could deal with frontier issues, but was able to do so in the light of a theological heritage which he loved and cherished. This is why our American theological enterprise, which often tends to be ahistorical as well as anarchic, can still learn much from him. Too often our traditionalists have no interest in emerging issues, and our pioneers feel they must exude a lusty disrespect for anything that happened before 1961. This is why so many new movements in theology end up in old blind alleys. Bonhoeffer knew the revolutionary power of a tradition understood and applied.

Tendencies in American Theology

Now let me turn to the four tendencies in current American theology that I mentioned to the German guests, tendencies that prove to me at least that we are still very far from being "beyond Bonhoeffer."

(1) Bonhoeffer's interest in the ecumenical promise was early and intense. His papers show him as a determined international conference-goer, a man who insisted on the unity and catholicity of the church just as the pro-Nazis within the German church were talking about a "German Christianity" and a "national church." He was afraid, he wrote in 1932, that the "polemical necessities of the time of the Reformation" had tended to "isolate German Protestantism in a dangerous way." He energetically rejected the arbitrary dropping of the word "Catholic" and substituting the word "Christian" or "Universal" in the recitation of the Apostles Creed as this was practiced by some ultra-Lutherans.

But Bonhoeffer's ecumenical dedication was not just liturgical or organizational. He believed that the various branches of Christendom needed each other as a theological necessity. This conviction was strengthened by serving German-speaking congregations in Spain and Italy, and by his year of study in America. Admittedly, Bonhoeffer's ecumenical interest was mainly inter-Protestant, but little else was available at the time. There is no doubt whatever that if he were alive today, he would still be urging the broadest possible basis for the church's theology and pressing for enlargements of the ecumenical perimeter.

(2) In his insight into the political relevance of theology Bonhoeffer was especially contemporary. It took a disturbingly long time for most of the men who later led the anti-Nazi Confessing Church to recognize the horrendous dangers Hitler represented. Niemoller, for example, supported the new "German age" for a year before he began that opposition which finally landed him in Sachsenhausen and Dachau for eight years. Not so Bonhoeffer. Hitler became Chancellor on January 30th, 1933. On February 1st, two days later,

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Bonhoeffer was cut off the radio in the midst of a broadcast in which he was criticizing the "leadership Principle."

Bonhoeffer's attack on the Nazis was not, like the utterances of some other church leaders, circuitous or indirect. He came to the specific point immediately. Later, as he developed his ethics, he repeatedly emphasized that the church must make its preaching specific and concrete. It must be against *this* war, or for *that* economic program and say so with no ambiguity. Was this because the church is infallible in these matters, has some unimpeded line from on high? Not at all. In fact, for Bonhoeffer, the reason was quite the contrary. The church can and must be specific in its ethical and political teaching because it *is* human. It will make mistakes and it can and must repent. As the church of Peter, he insists, it not only confesses Christ; sometimes it betrays him and always it is restored and forgiven. A church which plays it safe by phrasing its ethics in general exhortations, Bonhoeffer says, is untrue to the Gospel. It doesn't want to be a church under grace. It is also untrue to the teachings of Jesus which came in highly specific terms and which a faithful church must constantly translate into the equally specific terms of its age. It should never allow its fear of sometimes being wrong to deter it from always being concrete. A church under grace can afford to be concrete since God does not call it to be infallible. He does call it, however, to be faithful and relevant.

Bonhoeffer's ethical thinking has sometimes been used to defend a totally contextualist ethic which Bonhoeffer himself would probably have found dubious. He had nothing against the development and use of principles. He only opposed that cautious form of ethical teaching, all too common in our churches, by which church leaders enunciate principles so general they cut into no one's conscience. He wanted theologians and pastors to take the fearful risk of speaking to actual ethical situations in specific terms lest the historicity and fleshliness of the Gospel evaporate into vapid moralizing.

(3) A third area of contemporary theological unrest in America, also one in which Bonhoeffer had considerable interest, is that of the need for a new shape or "morphe" for the church in an urban-industrial society. Bonhoeffer wrote his doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio,* on the doctrine of the church. In it he refused to identify "church" with any one particular institutional structure. Without falling into the gaseous spiritualism of some kind of "invisible church," he contended that the church exists where man is restored to human community by God's grace. In his early writings he makes a good deal out of the fact that Peter's confession, the founding of the church, took place not in or around the temple, but at Caeserea Phillipi, that is, on the border of apostasy and paganism. The church always comes into existence, Bonhoeffer believed, where Christ is confessed on the borders of unbelief, doubt and heresy. The church is not at its purest and best in the inner keep of its own spirituality. Its very essence is its engagement with the world.

But Bonhoeffer was no anti-institutional romanticist. He believed the church lives only in solidarity with the world. But he insisted that the church must have structures which enable it to live this way. Those structures which turn the church in on itself, which make it a rare game sanctuary for pre-moderns, which prevent it from making a powerful political witness against evil in society—all such structures should be changed. They should be changed not by discarding them and exhorting all Christians to live faithfully as individuals, but by forging every structure of the church in the crucible of service and witness. Bonhoeffer learned the lesson of theologically sound structures the hard way: he saw the German church fail. He heard eloquent pronouncements from synod and pulpit, but saw the church fail to order its life in a way that would stem the tide of fascism.

Bonhoeffer saw the church as one of the empirical institutions contributing to the climate of a country and a world. He was not above participating in the often bruising battle to control it. Today we still need to see that a church can falsify pronouncement by performance, as the American churches have done so long in so many issues. But we must also see, as he did, that the answer to a badly organized and directed church is never no church at all. It is a church constantly renewed and reformed for mission.

(4) Surely the most difficult part of Bonhoeffer's work for most people to grasp is his talk about a "nonreligious" interpretation of the Gospel, his suggestion that for the "man come of age" we must find a way to speak of God "in a secular fashion." To some readers

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this still sounds like sheer nonsense. Religionless Christianity seems to be a *contradictio in adjectio*. But this is just where Bonhoeffer makes his most incisive contribution. If he is misunderstood here then all he says about the style of church life, about political obedience and about ethics will be lost.

Why do we need a nonreligious interpretation of the Gospel? We have seen that Bonhoeffer believed the church comes into existence at the edge of paganism. It is shaped both by the thrust of the Gospel and by the changing cultural topography of the world. This is just why we need a nonreligious interpretation. It is necessitated, Bonhoeffer believed, both by the requirements of the Gospel and by the needs of the twentieth century world.

The Gospel, Bonhoeffer insisted, is the good news of grace. It calls for no moral or intellectual preconditions on the part of the bearer. Nor does it demand any religious precondition. Bonhoeffer used the early Christian debate on circumcision to make this point. The apostles decided quite early that they could not require circumcision of new Christians and still be true to the free grace of God. Likewise today, Bonhoeffer argued, no precondition must be exacted as the price of grace. "Being religious" is the modern equivalent of being circumcised. It must not be made into a precondition of grace, since God's grace has already been lavished on man and is free. Also, as a student of Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer had learned that religion is not always a good thing, that it can become man's way to escape God as easily as it becomes man's way to serve Him. In short, his first reason for de-religionizing the Gospel was strictly theological.

But Bonhoeffer also argued for a religionless Christianity because of the ethos of the modern world. He saw in the process of secularization, which he dated from about the time of the Renaissance, not some seasonal tempest which would soon blow over, but a coming to fruition of much that Christianity had planted in the soil of Western civilization. In this respect Bonhoeffer stands closer to some Catholic humanists, to the traditional Catholic admiration for *urbanitas,* than he does to many Protestants. As an astute observer of his fellow men, he thought he detected the appearance in our time of a new type of person later termed by Helmut Gollwitzer as the "a-religious personality." Also, unlike so many theologians, Catholic or Protestant, Bonhoeffer affirmed much of the impact of the Enlightenment. He admired and celebrated man's growing power over nature, his aesthetic genius, his capacity to generate values. He pleaded with fellow theologians to begin fashioning theologies which would speak to man not in his weakness, sickness and death, but in his maturity, strength and responsibility. He did not feel that to acclaim man's stature somehow detracted from the glory of God.

To the very end Bonhoeffer lived with joy on the edge of paganism. In his final days he exchanged ideas with a Communist cellmate, the nephew of Molotov. Bonhoeffer loved and admired the atheists and agnostics with whom he lived his last hours. No doubt they deepened his determination to find a nonreligious interpretation of the Gospel. Standing on that difficult border between church and world, he had an unshakeable certainty that the God of grace could speak even to the nonreligious man. True both to earth and heaven, both to God and man, he saw with rare clarity that such a stance would necessitate far-reaching changes in future theology.

In short, Bonhoeffer wanted us to believe in man and his possibilities, and he did not feel that this should weaken our faith in God. This is obviously another point where we would be arrogant to claim that we are "beyond Bonhoeffer." The enormous and somewhat unmerited attention now being lavished on Teilhard de Chardin surely shows that many people today wish to acknowledge man's crucial place in the cosmos while still affirming God's encompassing sovereignty. They turn to Chardin, whose thought is often far less than intellectually precise, mainly because few other theologians have dared to strike out in this direction. Chardin also wanted to celebrate man in his strength.

The Meaning of Religion

But need this man be "nonreligious?" Since for Bonhoeffer religion implied an element of dependency, a weakness which must be matched by a strength from elsewhere, a need for answers not to be found by man himself, on his terms, the "man come of age" would *not* be religious. There will be those today, of course, contending with some justification that religion need not mean all these things, and that therefore Bonhoeffer's nonreligious interpretation would not be as radical as it first sounds. Perhaps they are right. Perhaps the meaning of the word "religion" can be so radically redefined that Bonhoeffer's challenge will evaporate. But I doubt it. For the vast majority of people today, especially in America, "religion" still means very much what he had in mind.

Bonhoeffer was utterly serious. He emphasized time and time again that God had founded his church "beyond religion," that to be a Christian was, "not to be religious in a particular sense, but to be a man." He meant that we should not deplore, but greet the appear-

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ance of the areligious personality. He meant that Christians should not be trapped into some crusade to defend "religion" of whatever sort against the threat of "atheism" or of "secularism." After all, certain types of atheism are closer to biblical faith than are certain types of religion. Pompey was shocked when he pushed his way into the inner court of the Jewish Temple after conquering Jerusalem, and found no statue. He became convinced that the Jews were really atheists, which as far as his gods were concerned, they probably were. The early Christians were maimed and murdered not principally because they believed in Jesus, but because they did *not* believe in Caesar. They were the forerunners, Bonhoeffer would argue, of the areligious personalities of our age.

But how *shall* we speak of God to the secular man? Bonhoeffer gave no answer. Still, from the very issues to which he devoted his life, we may get some hint. Gathering up those interests we could speculate as follows: 1) A divided church will not speak to the man come of age. Mired in its own provincialisms, obsessed with defenses of its partial truths, it elicits hardly more than a yawn from the people Bonhoeffer wished to address. If reconciliation and authentic community constitute God's gift to the world, then a dismembered church contravenes its own message. Unity is not something for Christians to enjoy among themselves. It is a prerequisite of mission.

2) A church which eschews politics, or worse still, uses politics to shore up its own position in the world, will never speak to secular man. Ministers and nuns on picket lines for racial justice today are not just signs of the church's "social concern." They are evangelists, telling modern man what the Gospel says. The church which remains securely within the "spiritual realm" will annoy no one and convince no one, for secular man is a political animal *par excellence,* and that indispensable dimension of the Gospel which goes "beyond politics" begins after, not before, the political obedience of Christians.

3) A church whose ethical pronouncements remain generic and abstract will never speak to the secular man. He does not live "in general." He lives his life in a particular place, doing a certain job, faced with specific issues. Vague moral advice does not interest him. Specific ethical demands may infuriate him, stimulate him, or encourage him. But at least he will hear them, which is all the church can ever succeed in accomplishing. Whether he believes or obeys is not, in the final analysis, determined by the church but by the Spirit of God at work within him.

Thus the answer to the fourth issue raised by Bonhoeffer, how to speak of God to the secular man, will only be given to us as we grapple faithfully with the previous three. Of course, Bonhoeffer has been misunderstood and misused. He will be again. Of course theological fads are always dangerous. But we are in no sense finished with Bonhoeffer. Nor do I believe we can move "beyond" him until we begin to be the kind of church he knew we must be, a church which lives on the border of unbelief, which speaks with pointed specificity to its age, which shapes its message and mission not for its own comfort but for the health and renewal of the world.

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JEAN VALENTINE

SOLOMON

Still, gold, open-handed,
sad King Solomon
listened; they started,
weightless, close to his ear,
sweet as bees.

One with light breasts and knees
danced with herself before Solomon,
one stood by with barbarian eyes
mad for Solomon,
one, a child, even touched his face

and he smiled in his clothes,
shut his eyes.

Solomon sat by a white pond
his skin thin gold
and his head down.

One stood by with barbarian eyes
mad for Solomon.
She came to his hands,

light, far, anyone
or no one. Solomon
touched her eyes.

Too close,
too heavy, the dark
did just what it had promised,
the Seurat park
turned sharp as it had started:

he closed his hands.

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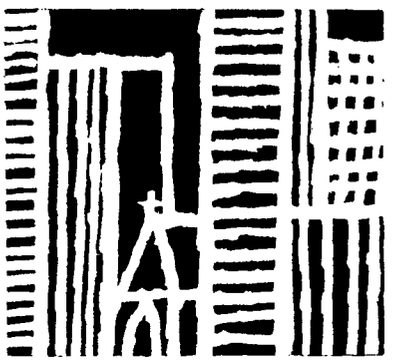
THE SECULAR CITY

Toward a Theology of Secularity

DANIEL CALLAHAN



Ordinarily, there is nothing so hard for the religious man to cope with as social change. It sets him to twitching, worrying and desperately attempting to squeeze from Scripture some measure of solace. Now and then he may try to find a way of turning the change to his advantage, or see some faintly redeeming possibilities in cultural earthquakes. But his more common response is denunciation of the new. He feels threatened, and his instant reaction is defensive and abusive. Historically, he has some reason to feel this way. Massive social change inevitably affects the religious life of a society. The shift from feudalism to capitalism in the West is as good an instance as any of what can happen. Entrepreneurs, not bishops, began to call the tune. Troubled believers felt they could only hum a dirge.

Of late there has been a shift in this pattern. During the past couple of decades one theologian after another has come forward to reluctantly bless scientific, technological and economic advances. They have learned at least one lesson from their predecessors' mistakes: no amount of ecclesiastical railing can do much to stop social upheavals. The way to survive is to hang on for dear life, all the while looking for some way of legitimately baptizing the new tiger. The theologian may not always like what he has to do, but at least he does it. He smiles bravely and gets to work.

Harvey Cox is very much a part of this new mode, only he goes one step further, ecstatically hailing contemporary social change as the occasion for a revitalized Christianity. As much as anything, it is probably this fetching enthusiasm which accounts for the reception being given his book *The Secular City* (Macmillan. $1.45). Already into a third printing, eagerly passed from hand to hand, quickly adopted by a variety of study groups, it has all the earmarks of a religious *cause célèbre.* It must, then, be meeting some deep need: the longing for a persuasive and unembarrassed theology of secularity. Many attempts have been made in this direction, but almost all of them suffer from the debilitating drawback of treating secularity as a religious disaster—a redeemable disaster, but still a disaster. There is no hint of this in Cox's book.

The key to its power lies in his almost rapturous love for two characteristic features of our age: secularization and urbanization. This won't commend the book to some, but Cox starts from a premise hard to dismiss, *what is.* Far from running their course, secularity and the city are just beginning to take hold. There are always strategies available to evade the impact of historical trends: one can work for the return of a golden age, or fashion utopias, or just withdraw into private metaphysical enclosures, seeking an other-worldly transcendence. Cox will have none of this. His method is to look squarely in the eye that face of contemporary life which most offends the religious and cultural savants; and then to say: you are good, and if you are not we can make you so.

The much bemoaned anonymity of urban life, for

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instance, Cox hails. It provides the possibility of an historically unparalleled freedom from social convention and culturally enforced mores. Mobility and rootlessness provide like possibilities: a liberation from the smothering embrace of small-town provincialism. Another omnipresent bogeyman of the wise, the modern organization, is no less extolled. Better that structure of human relationships and purposes, with its flexibility, secularized goals, orientation toward the future and limited claims upon its members than a sacred order with its enslavement to the past and its deification of law and custom.

Cox's treatment of "secularization" is unflinching. Defining it as "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one," he defends its human values and claims that its roots are biblical. How is this possible? Cox's argument rests on three points. There is the dis-enchantment of nature stemming from the Hebraic conception of creation; the desacralization of politics arising from a separation of the political and religious order; and the deconsecration of values which issues from the Jewish relativizing of human values and their representations. Thus was the way opened for a "constructive relativism," which "allows secular man to note the transience and relativity of all cultural creations and of every value system without sinking into the abyss of nihilism." From these roots the technological-urban tree was able to spring.

Pragmatic and Profane

The cumulative result is a secular man who is pragmatic and profane: "life for him is a set of problems, not an unfathomable mystery. He brackets off the things that cannot be dealt with and deals with those that can. He wastes little time thinking about 'ultimate' or 'religious' questions. And he can live with highly provisional solutions." Just the kind of man, in other words, who is the despair of Sunday preachers. Not so for Cox, whose book shows the decisive impact of Bonhoeffer. "The Gospel," he writes, "does not call men to return to a previous stage of his development. It does not summon man back to dependence, awe and religiousness. Rather it is a call to imaginative urbanity and creative secularity." Just as the city has replaced the town, so also should the political replace the metaphysical as the context of human thought.

Are there any clouds on the horizon? Very many, but none which are incapable of human mastery given intelligence, planning, and the full freedom of the Gospel. The role of the Church is not to change the present historical direction of society, but to exercise its power of cultural exorcism, its mission of reconciliation, its potentialities as an avant-garde for the Kingdom of God.

"God"? One might well inquire at this point just how God fits into this secularized world. Having dismissed metaphysics, Cox is not tempted to create a new natural theology. Instead he asserts that the word "God" has no meaning for secular man; and he implies that even the Christian is not very certain what it means. But shouldn't this at least be a source of discomfort, or even of those existential paroxysms which Cox deplores? Not at all, for God has often hidden Himself for a time, choosing to reveal His name only gradually "through the abrasive experiences of social change. . . . Perhaps, like Moses, we must simply take up the work of liberating the captives, confident that we will be granted a new name by the events of the future."

All of this is a rich pudding, especially from a Protestant minister and professor who in an earlier age would have been called a "divine." But it adds up to a coherent whole, however questionable many of the pieces. By and large, it makes considerably more sense than some of the speculation to be found in a recent volume of the *Concilium* series, *The Church and the World,* edited by Johannes B. Metz (Paulist Press. $4.50). This is painful to say, because the purpose of the volume is to chart the new frontiers of Catholic thought. The problem is not that the *Concilium* volume lacks boldness or even originality, but that many of the authors are still too much caught up in metaphysical, existentialist or personalist quandaries.

A reading of Cox's book has *almost* convinced me that the day of such problems has passed. However pertinent for some aspects of human existence, a relentless concentration on them contributes very little to the creation of viable social structures and mastery of the material world. It is to continue, in other terms, the traditional quest for the absolute—whether that be construed as a grasp of the totality of being, the nature of existence or the essence of persons. All too easily this plays into the hands of those who can't stand the problematical, the functional, the pragmatic, the experimental. They are essentially "religious" searches, at least if religion is understood as a hunt for the permanent in the face of the transitory, of ultimate meaning amidst uncertainty. Too often they are concerns which tend to keep alive some old and dangerous dualities, even if that is not their intention.

The persistence of dualism can be seen in a distinction Monsignor Gerard Philips commends in his essay in *The Church and the World.* "Catholics," he says, "are learning to make a clearer distinction between their

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strictly ecclesial mission and the mature program of action they have to realize now in the world." Heaven help us if they are. What Monsignor Philips does not seem to notice is that a sharp sundering of the spiritual and the temporal leads to an egregious type of Christian utilitarianism: man should be served, not for his own sake, but for that of the Church. As he revealingly puts it, the Church "could not perform its primary mission if it did not rouse in its members, in behalf of all their human brethren, a spirit of disinterested mutual help." This kind of thinking has been the source of the Church's failure to demonstrate that it is fully able to help build a humane social order. It is nothing less than a gentle way of saying that the Church's ultimate interests lie elsewhere, thus forgetting that when man is slighted for the sake of God, God will soon be slighted also.

Equally mistaken, though less hazardous, is Hans Urs von Balthasar's assertion in the same volume that a "demythologized" and "dephilosophized" theology "would have nothing more to do with the totality of being." "Of necessity," he says, "it could only present itself as a solace for the anguished existential subject." I must confess I can't discover where this "necessity" lies. The whole point of trying to rid theology of dead myths and an excessive dependence upon philosophical modes of thought is to better grasp the essence of the biblical message in its own terms, and from there to learn something about man's condition. One major fruit of this effort has been the discovery that the Bible is far more than the husk of hidden eternal truths. It is a record of man's encounter with God: a God who reveals Himself in history rather than in the philosopher's study, a God who speaks through the language of events rather than that of timeless essences.

Put abstractly like this, there are probably few Catholic theologians who would sharply dissent. I am merely saying what it has now become fashionable to say. Yet if one looks to find evidence of a new creativity in dealing with man's historical and political life, one is most likely to discover only a new set of abstractions. One might expect, for instance, to find the Catholic sociologist or psychologist accorded a stature equal to that of the theologian. Or to find that the natural and social sciences, which deal with matter and man in their empirical grittiness, dominating the advance guard of Catholic thought. This is not the case at all. Most of the great Catholic figures of our day—the Rahners, the Küngs, the Schillebeeckxs, the von Balthasars—are notably scant in references to economics, political science, urban planning, and even to the sociology and psychology of religion.

What they have done, and what the Church has honored them for, is to substitute new theologies for old theologies. That is a worthwhile project for those concerned with the intricacies of the Christian revelation; and some people should be. But it is also a graphic illustration of why even the freshest Catholic theology has the same mark of irrelevance as did its forerunners. It is essentially turned in upon itself, and nowhere more obviously than when it tries to talk about "the world" exclusively in the language of theology. The new realm of Catholic thought—of I-thou encounters, salvation history, omega points, Lonergan-like insight, *sein* and *dasein*, kerygma—is a delightful place for Catholics to live. It's just that we're the only ones who live there, along with a few scattered Protestants. The rest of the world lives somewhere else and our new jargon is just as esoteric and beside the point outside the family circle as the old.

I say this out of a vast sense of frustration. Give or take a few setbacks, the recent progress of Catholic theological thought has been nothing less than spectacular. But I see little evidence that it will come to mean anything more to secular man than did the old scholastic panoply of clear and certain ideas. I am secular man, too, and my Catholic brothers are legion.

Sacred and Secular

In an otherwise excellent article in *America* recently on Christian secularity, Father Thomas E. Clarke, S.J., felt compelled to caution that "the distinction between *sacred* and *secular* is beyond question." There we have the central issue: is this distinction actually beyond doubt? If it is, then it is almost certainly hopeless to expect that secular man will ever know what the Christian is talking about. Equally hopeless would be an expectation that the Christian secular man could come to know how to construct a coherent human life. As long as he feels that life for him necessarily entails walking some delicate tight-rope between the sacred and secular, the natural and the supernatural, the redeemed and the unredeemed, he will always be dizzy. He won't and can't go off into the desert; but then he will always worry whether he can be as totally committed to man's life on earth as the most ardent atheist.

I don't think this is a fictitious or outdated problem. Some of the most disturbed Catholics I have run across recently are those who have heeded the Church's call to serve the world and then have found, once they started doing so, that their Christianity ceased to have much meaning for them. They discovered that the work of the world seems to carry its own intrinsic justification,

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requiring neither religious motives nor religious goals. A shock of this kind is only natural to those exhorted for years to maintain a balance between sacred and secular—and all the more so when they have been told that the secular world has no final meaning.

Far more illuminating is a perspective on God and man which sees man's temporal concerns and drives as one with his spiritual destiny. The central meaning of the Incarnation, I take it, is that Christ *has* redeemed man and matter. If this is so, then the sacred and the secular have entered into a relationship of unity; not a perfect or complete unity, but surely enough to render any talk of their radical difference highly misleading. Worse than that, a desire to maintain the distinction forces one to follow Monsignor Philips' route into the wilderness of primary and secondary ecclesial missions, of separating love of God from love of man. Once into that jungle there is no way out.

Yet Cox's stance has some equally imposing difficulties to overcome. Can secular man, after all, afford to ignore metaphysics? Can he really get away with a purely pragmatic solution to his socio-historical problems? Up to a point, I think the answer is yes to both questions. It has to be yes, because many men patently manage to live anti-metaphysical, pragmatic lives and seem to be none the worse for it. The Christian may look at such a man with skepticism and incredulity, but there are many secular men who can confound his pessimistic expectations.

The question, then, is not whether such men can exist, and exist happily—they just do—but whether mankind as a whole can live this way either now or in the future? Let me say that I personally don't know; it would be silly to say anything else. At the same time, it also has to be said that decisions have consequences. The pragmatic decisions taken by this generation for the sake of its own life will inevitably affect, if not decisively shape, the life of future generations. The past has always imposed its relativities upon the future, and it is likely to continue doing so. The pragmatic man who does not recognize this will be a dangerous man. But as soon as he does see that his decisions will have consequences, and tries responsibly to take this fact into account, he will cease to be wholly pragmatic. He will have no other choice. One way or the other, he will have to dip his toe into the murky waters of metaphysics. He will have to fashion at least some tentative conclusions about what is good for man regardless of his specific historical situation. He will have to say what minimal conditions are necessary for human freedom, existence and fulfillment.

Cox would have the Christian "unreservedly contextual" in his ethics and in his evangelism. Yet if the responsible secular man can't be all that contextual himself, it is difficult to see how the Christian can either. What Cox wants is a Christian who knows how to respond to his present age; how to unencumber himself of an anachronistic past; how to speak to the here and now; how to lay the ground for the future. These are fine goals, but each of them actually requires the ability to get out of one's context, at least some of the time. Cox himself does this when he speaks warmly of a "biblical perspective" on the world; or when he uses the imagery of the "kingdom of God." These are categories which cut across time and through history. They illuminate the contextual without themselves being wholly contextual.

Ironically, of course, once Cox begins using biblical language, he cuts himself off from secular man. Here, I think, Cox has to fish or cut bait. If secular man and his way of life are self-sufficient, any talk about taking a "biblical perspective" is beside the point. Who needs it, and so what, anyway? The only possible reason for bothering would be that even at its utopian best the world of secular man will have its nether regions. The *Playboy* bachelor can make the most of urban anonymity; not everyone else can. Mobility is grand if one has brains and a future; not everyone does. And so on. The urban-secular coin has two sides—and so does man.

Had Cox recognized this more clearly, he might well have been less cavalier toward those caught up in existential anguish. One reason for their plight is the often oppressive weight of the present. There are times when life is just awful: boring, stupid, brutal or trivial. The promise of the future does not always, nor can it, drive out the pain of the present. Some people are going to die tomorrow. That is their context, and they want to know why. This is a very personal question, not something that history of sociology or politics can throw much light on. A question like this is wretchedly ultimate, direct and non-contextual. It just won't go away.

An obvious conclusion at this point would be to say that the upshot is something of a draw. Those who would have men put aside metaphysics, existentialism and the higher speculations of personalism in favor of politics, sociology and history have the temper of modern man on their side. They are also in a better position to turn directly to immediate human needs, unencumbered by any pressing demand to work out final values and goals. On the other hand, man is not just a political and historical creature; he does not live by social reconstruction alone. Someone has to speak to the non-historical self, and never more so than when all of a man's plans and hopes come to nothing

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or when he looks death in the face. Thus can the ball be volleyed back and forth.

Still, I suspect that a choice has to be made. Ideally, it should be possible for humans to turn their attention simultaneously toward metaphysics and social planning. Psychologically, this is difficult to manage. Historically, the Christian's obsession with ultimacy has meant a debasement of the temporal. Even when he tried to take his present moment seriously, his theological concerns would not allow him to do so. His orientation toward an eternal future kept him in bondage to the historical past; the world was always outrunning him. Once again it is outrunning him. His only hope of catching up, I'm afraid, is to let go. To let go of his desire for immediate meaning. To let go of his wish for religious security. To let go of his need to see the hand of God. To let go of the quest for a new vision, or the revivification of the old one.

I suppose this is almost too much to ask of the Christian. But if the Christian cannot wait for God, if the Christian cannot make the course of history his own, if the Christian cannot give himself unreservedly to man and his temporal existence—then it is hard to see how he will ever live in the present, much less speak to it. There are many ways of gaining the whole world while losing one's soul. There are also many ways of gaining one's soul and losing the world. The world we stand to lose is the world Christ redeemed.

Aid for the Unions

THE FATE OF 14(b)

SIDNEY LENS

President Johnson's proposal to repeal Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act conjures up an image of White House emissaries and labor leaders in a smoke-filled room making a political bargain. The unionists remind Mr. Johnson's delegates the Democratic Party has promised since 1948 to "repeal the slave bill." The President's men plead "you must be practical, we can't get the whole thing through Congress." And finally the bargain is struck—everyone will focus on getting rid of 14(b), thus invalidating right-to-work laws in 19 states. Everything else will be dropped for the time being, the status quo in industrial relations will remain subtantially intact.

Perhaps it did not happen precisely that way, in a smoke-filled room, but there can be no other explanation for this concentrated effort on 14(b). The President is accommodating an important ally; the unions are expecting to enlarge their ranks. There is nothing underhanded or shady about it, for Section 14(b) is punitive and morally unsound. It should be repealed, and the right-to-work laws in 19 states, which it authorizes, should be invalidated. It will be a healthy development for America if labor adds a few hundred thousand members in the mass production and building trades unions once it can sign union shop agreements in the right-to-work states. But, because it is a political arrangement—necessary and useful though it may be—it fails to grapple with legitimate criticisms. Instead of revamping an unsatisfactory industrial relations system, it adds another bit of patchwork. Instead of dealing with the problem in long-range focus and philosophically, it touches—and blurs—short-range objectives.

To grasp these flaws the problem of 14(b) must be put in historical perspective. The AFL-CIO states the issue thus: "The union shop arose as a matter of necessity. It has survived because it represents the basic principles of democracy and justice—the people who get benefits from a union contract should support and join that union."

Back in the 1920's employers devised the "American Plan" to promote the "open" shop—the non-union shop. Employers in mass production industries not only refused to deal with labor organizations but often required their employees to sign "yellow dog" contracts, agreeing in advance not to join a union. To supplement the open shop campaign, innumerable employers organized their own "company unions." A foreman or a lawyer would bring a few workers together, write a constitution, select company-minded men as officers and parade this as a "good" form of unionism as against the "bad" AFL—and later the CIO. A union in a single shop was of course easily controlled. When the upheaval

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of the 1930's began, company unions were used to undermine legitimate ones. For instance, General Motors informed the United Auto Workers that it could not deal exclusively with the UAW because it had its own company union. This presumed "impartiality" lent itself to considerable mischief. A worker might take up a grievance through the UAW and be turned down, but if he took it up through the company union he would get it resolved. The aim obviously was to tear allegiances away from legitimate unions to the ones controlled by management.

Thus hundreds of strikes of the 1930's pivoted around a single word—"sole." Unions demanded *sole* collective bargaining rights, as a means of undercutting the company unions and reducing friction. The sitdown strikes at General Motors and Chrysler in 1937 were over this one word—"sole." If a majority in a factory wants a particular union, said the CIO, that union should bargain for everyone. There should be no opportunity to pit one union against another. It is fair to say, in retrospect, that without this concept of *sole* collective bargaining the CIO would not have prospered and the labor movement as a whole not have grown from three million to 17 million members in a single generation.

Concomitant with this development on the picket line, sole collective bargaining became the accepted legal doctrine as well. Each bargaining unit can have only one bargaining agent; whichever union secures the majority—in a government-conducted election, usually—bargains for everyone. The corollary to this doctrine is that the union is required to service everyone in its unit, even if not a member of the organization. And during the life of the agreement the union must, if asked, handle grievances for everyone, including non-members. There have been a few occasions when a union has had to arbitrate a grievance for a non-member, at a cost of many hundreds of dollars.

Viewed from this focus the argument of "compulsion" takes on a different light. The "compulsion" involved in a union shop is no more dire than the compulsion imposed on a housewife who must pay A & P 28 cents for a loaf of bread. She does not have to shop at A & P, but if she does, she must pay for what she buys. It is in this sense that a worker is "compelled" to pay for services rendered if he works in a union shop. As the AFL-CIO puts it, there is no room for the "free rider." It is the union that is actually under compulsion, for the law requires it to perform a service for non-members for which it receives no payment.

Furthermore, the "compulsion" thesis is somewhat distorted. Actually compulsion is the worker's daily lot. He accepts compulsion when he takes a job. He agrees to a dozen conditions of work: to punch the employer's time card, work a certain shift, accept specified wages, abide by a host of work rules, obey his foreman. The only free choice he has is that he does not have to take the job. What the union does when it negotiates a union shop agreement is to add one *union* condition to the many imposed by management. Here, again, the worker is free—if he does not like this condition he can take a job elsewhere. There is no more reason why he should receive union services for nothing than for the housewife to receive bread free of charge.

Having made this point, however—strong and overwhelming though it is—one has an uneasy feeling. The fact is there are some situations where the union shop becomes a mockery—instead of benefitting the rank-and-file worker it becomes a shackle. I am not referring to the religious dissenter, such as the Seventh Day Adventist, who refuses to belong to a union as a matter of principle. He must pay the price for his scruples just like the religious Jew who must quit a job because it requires him to work on Saturday. What I have in mind are circumstances such as these:

(1) A legitimate union begins organizing a factory of 150 workers, mostly Puerto Ricans. Thereupon an unscrupulous union official from another union signs a "backdoor" contract with an equally unscrupulous employer calling for $1.25 an hour wages—the legal minimum. The Puerto Ricans pay $4 a month dues but get no benefits. The union shop agreement precludes them from joining a legitimate union.

(2) A company merges two plants, one predominantly Negro and unionized, the other predominantly white and unorganized. The union which represents the first plant makes a deal with the employer. In return for the union shop it gives the Negroes an option—if they accept no raise they will maintain their seniority and replace some of the white workers; if they opt for a 10¢ an hour raise they will lose their seniority and most of them will be laid off.

(3) An employee who has been working 19 hours a week overtime for 15 years has an argument with his business agent because wages were not being computed correctly. He himself is only slightly affected, but the other 20 members in his shop are seriously hurt. Suddenly his 19 hours overtime is taken away from him. He complains to the business agent, he complains to his international president, but to no avail.

These are not hypothetical situations—I know of them at first hand, because the victimized workers came to me for help. And while they are not typical and involve only a few tens of thousands of union men, they do cast a cloud against the union shop. Theoretically there

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are "remedies" in these three situations, but practically speaking they do not work. There is obviously a problem here, which neither the labor movement nor the President, in urging repeal of 14(b), want to confront at this time.

There is something else to be considered in discussing 14(b). The union shop does give a union security, but it also relaxes pressures on the union leader. Sometimes it disposes him to disregard or downplay grievances. As a matter of fact many sophisticated employers insist on a union shop, because they know that without one, union officials must fight harder for grievances and in some cases solicit complaints.

I know of a case in a right-to-work state where a large drug company *forced* its workers to remain in the union in order to cut down the number of grievances. As the union leader explains it: "We used to have groups come to us with ultimatums, that we either get a certain problem resolved or they'll stop paying dues. Sometimes what they wanted us to do was entirely to alter a contract provision. We knew it couldn't be done but we took it up with management anyway, and when we got turned down we arbitrated the issues just to keep fellows happy. Finally the company called me in and asked what the heck we were doing? I told them frankly that we were forced to take up these complaints because we would lose members otherwise. After that we found that no one was resigning from our union. Anytime a worker threatened to revoke his check-off card the company would call him in and make it clear that it would make life difficult for him if he did so. In practice, therefore, management enforced a union shop rather than face up to so many grievances."

The Philosophic Argument

The strongest argument, it seems to me, for repealing 14(b) and invalidating the right-to-work laws is philosophic. The question we must face is not whether labor is entitled to union security but how much *power* it should have. How far is the state *obligated* to strengthen the labor movement? This indeed is the unanswered question; society has no guideposts for making a determination. Should unions, for instance, be guaranteed enough power to be able to unionize the South? The two million agricultural workers earning scarcely more than $1,000 a year? The millions of breadwinners below the poverty level?

On reflection it seems apparent that a humane society must begin with the premise that organizations of the underprivileged are entitled to all the power needed to obliterate poverty and achieve a decent living standard. If this seems brash, we must remind ourselves that the government constantly aids the business community. Tariffs, for instance, protect the weak industries from foreign competition. Government research, to the tune of many billions a year, introduces new products for business. Subsidies for roads—such as the ones being built in Appalachia—open up new areas to business. Local governments sell land to insurance companies at deflated prices for housing development, and give tax concessions to new industries coming to their communities. It is taken for granted that government must strengthen industry. But if the government reinforces the power of business, why should it not consciously and actively strengthen the labor movement?

At a time when we are talking of an all-out war on poverty, we still have no guideposts for determining how far the government should go in propping trade union power. This, it seems to me, is the focal point from which we must judge labor legislation. If we believe with President I. W. Abel of the steelworkers' that "the business of this country is, and should be, people," then unions must be given enough prerogatives so that they can unionize the poor and elevate living standards to levels consonant with our national wealth.

Viewed in this light the labor movement is entitled to a union shop because America needs strong unions. It is, in my opinion, as simple as that. If our unions could be strong without the union shop, we might dispense with it. But in present-day America, under present circumstances, that is impossible. The union shop in our country is *a substitute for class consciousness.* American labor, unlike sections of European labor, does not have an allegiance to unionism as a matter of socialist or working class principle. A worker here belongs to a union for pragmatic reasons—it brings him benefits, just like an insurance policy. And—pragmatically—again, if he can avoid paying dues, he does so. Consider the Cone Mills in North Carolina. The textile workers' union has been the bargaining agent there for years. But since there is a right-to-work law in North Carolina there is no union shop. Result? The pragmatic workers, out to "save a buck," just do not belong and do not pay dues. They want the union, mind you. Twice there have been efforts to de-certify it, and twice the employees have voted in Labor Board elections to remain with the textile union. But they will not pay dues to it.

Often a union that cannot win the union shop disintegrates. At the Ideal Roller plant in Chicago a local union won an election by a narrow margin. The company disputed the result and took the issue through one court after another. Finally after two or three years it yielded, recognized the union, and signed a contract. The con-

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ditions were moderately good, the wage increase better than expected, but only 21 out of 200 employees were willing to sign up with the union. By the time the next contract time came around the union had disintegrated entirely. This same thing happens in the South with annoying frequency. A union—say the textile workers—wins an election and signs a so-so agreement. Without a union shop the union is unable to consolidate its ranks. Management is slow in processing grievances; it fires a few union leaders; it creates an atmosphere of fear and tension. When contract time rolls around again the union has lost its following. Management either refuses to deal with it or asks the Labor Board to conduct a de-certification election.

Theoretically one can say: "Well, if the workers don't want a union, why should they have one?" But it is not that simple. The argument would make sense if workers were not afraid of joining a union, if labor had its own press to counteract the distorted image created by the mass media, and if local authorities really enforced the law judiciously. But none of these conditions prevails. There is seldom an organizing drive in which the employer does not discharge an employee for his role in forming the union or does not spread the word "if you organize we'll have to shut the plant, or move the plant, or cut down production." This is all illegal, but it happens constantly. A worker knows instinctively that if he joins a union he is taking a chance. This atmosphere of fear is reinforced by the mass media, which sustains the image of an immense movement led by corrupt elements who care nothing for the rank and file. Even though the McClellan Committee named only 113 men who might be considered "corrupt"—out of 250,000 union officials—newspaper publicity has magnified the charges to enormous dimensions.

Additionally there is the fear generated by local authorities. Periodically a union official is arrested for distributing leaflets or is assaulted by company men while police stand by and wink. Or, we learn of a law in DeWitt, Arkansas, requiring union organizers to pay a fee of $25 a day for a "work permit." Three Mississippi towns, Yazoo City, Lexington and Canton, charge union representatives $1,000 a day to organize.

Under these circumstances, it is incumbent on the federal government to give labor far more power. Approximately 60 efforts have been made to introduce state right-to-work laws from 1947, the year of the Taft-Hartley law, to the present, and while two-thirds failed, 19 states—half of them in the South—did succumb. With the exception of Texas none of these is a major industrial state, yet the right-to-work laws have been harmful. Labor presents an impressive array of statistics to show that percapita income in the right-to-work states is far below the national average of $2,550. Mississippi, for instance, has a $1,285 percapita income; Arkansas, $1,504; South Carolina, $1,545. Nevada is the only right-to-work state above the average. Generally speaking the right-to-work states have far fewer union members proportionately than others. Alabama has thirty percent of its labor force enrolled—a good record which compares favorably with the forty-one percent in Illinois. But the two Carolinas have less than eight percent, and Virginia twelve percent. Such states are a halter around labor's neck depressing wage levels everywhere, and halting the union momentum.

If Congress heeds President Johnson's appeal and revokes Section 14(b) the union movement will be able to reverse this pattern. It will add, as already indicated, some hundreds of thousands of members to the mass production and building trade unions, and it may—may—finally get started in a Southern organizing drive. This could be a great boost toward solving the civil rights problem and changing the one-Party character of the states below the Mason-Dixon line.

But when all is said and done, the repeal of 14(b) by itself is a totally inadequate step. The main problems in our industrial relations system remain relatively untouched: (1) how to add sufficiently to union power so that it can obliterate poverty, and (2) how to defend the prerogatives of the rank-and-file worker against his leadership.

Nothing that the "Great Society" had done in fighting poverty is as important, it seems to me, as the answer to these two questions. My own suggestions would include Labor Board reform, a labor code, a labor court, extension of the wage and hour act, measures to aid farm labor, a reduced work week combined with a cradle-to-the-grave education system, and similar measures. Whether these would meet the challenge is beyond the scope of this short piece. The unfortunate aspect of the present controversy over 14(b), however, is that neither the President nor the labor movement are even willing to come to grips with these basic problems.

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SQUARE'S PROGRESS

We are pleased to note that Farrar, Straus & Giroux has just published a new novel by Wilfrid Sheed, Square's Progress.

Mr. Sheed, COMMONWEAL'S *drama critic, is also the author of* A Middle-Class Education *and* The Hack. *His drama column will be resumed shortly.* —THE EDITORS

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ALIENATED ALIENS

THE SCREEN

The Third New York Film Festival is in full swing and the reviewers are once again getting eye strain in their efforts not to miss any gems in the enticing 25-film program. It will be quite awhile before the general public gets to see these films. A few from the last Festival appeared throughout the country immediately. But some of the best ones, like "Nobody Waved Goodbye," "The Trial of Joan of Arc," and "Before the Revolution," didn't turn up until this year. And some of the others have never been released here at all. Ours not to reason why the vagaries of film distributors; but ours to appreciate a worthy foreign movie when it does turn up, however belatedly.

Such is the case with "Life Upside Down," a French picture known as "Inside Out" when it was shown at the 1964 New York Film Festival, and as "*La Vie à l'Envers*" in France. It might be called, in this age of how-to books, "How to Become a Schizophrenic." Not an easy movie to describe and make appealing to an audience, "Life Upside Down" tells the seemingly depressing story of a man's gradual disintegration until he finally loses all contact with reality. Because this film is so well made, with a superb performance in the lead role by Charles Denner and first-rate direction by Alain Jessua, who also wrote the script, it is neither as glum nor as grim as it sounds. Jessua's direction has an interesting combination of poetic sensitivity and stark realism which heighten the unusual story's suspense and make us anxious to know what's going to happen next. On the surface, "Life Upside Down" is a very quiet and sometimes amusing movie; it is only when this well-dressed, thoughtful, rather pleasant though eccentric Frenchman portrayed by Denner becomes more and more alienated and we realize what's going on that the film's chilling aspect becomes apparent.

At first, Denner, a real estate agent, seems only to be rebelling against the middle-class society around him: his bosses; the pretty girl who shares his bed and board (Anna Gaylor) and is an attractive dumb bunny mainly interested in her work as a model; and her friends who are feather-brained as she is. Denner becomes bored. Then one day he discovers how not to see the people (and later, the things) he's looking at—and also how not to hear them. The film has marvelous shots of Denner with disappearing people in a room, on a subway, on an endlessly-long escalator. To please his mistress, he marries her—in an mechanical-automaton kind of legal wedding. And then, bored to distraction, he walks out on the luncheon afterward. As time passes, Denner is convinced that man's evil stems from his inability to live alone. And when his wife leaves him, although he loves her he is unmoved. Alone in his bare white apartment (from which he has moved the furniture because if you aren't careful things take over), he tells his story into the tape recorder his doctor has given him. And at the end, his doctor takes him from Paris to a large, well-guarded building in the country where he continues to record his thoughts and story in a stark white room. "I feel so happy I could stay like this forever."

Outwardly, Denner never appears crazy, and if the change in him weren't so gradual and made so logical by director-writer Jessua, this movie would just be a lot of nonsense. But "Life Upside Down" is extraordinary in subject matter and technique and in its success in convincing us of this man's finding happiness in the end.

What the girl in "Rapture" needs is to be reassured and loved. She's very much on the wacky side too. But, only 16, she's considerably younger than the man in "Life Upside Down" and is probably not daft at all, but having been told by her family that she's crazy, she believes it and behaves accordingly—still hugging dolls at her advanced age. When she makes a scarecrow, she falls in love with it; and when an escaped convict steals the scarecrow's clothes, she is convinced that this is the scarecrow come to life and that he's for her. But when she discovers the housemaid and the scarecrow-come-alive in the hay, the poor girl goes berserk—until calmed down by the ever-loving convict who takes her to the city where the noise and excitement prove too much after the quiet of her home in Brittany.

No doubt this story, with a script by Stanley Mann from a novel by Phyllis Hastings, could have been turned into a good movie. Director John Guillermin certainly manages to hold our interest throughout the tale; and his cast are excellent: Patricia Gozzi (the girl in "Sundays and Cybele") as the wide-eyed, queer little creature in these sad events; Melvyn Douglas as her cold, mystery-riddled father; Dean Stockwell as the convict-scarecrow; and Gunnel Lindblom, the lovely Swedish actress from "The Silence," as the servant more interested in men than in housekeeping. Although the movie is absorbing, director Guillermin allows it to get too arty at times with his good cast and handsome, foreboding Brittany scenery. Furthermore, the whole crazy affair carries no conviction. You keep asking yourself why this and why that—until finally you begin to ask why "Rapture" at all?

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

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BOOKS

The capitalist system: a complex mood of decadence

The Accidental Century

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

Macmillan, $5.95

EMILE CAPOUYA

Michael Harrington's first book, *The Other America*, went very nearly unremarked for some eight months after it was published, and it appeared that the author's effort of social imagination had expended itself in the void. Then, as it happened, Mr. Dwight MacDonald wrote at some length about the book in the pages of the *New Yorker*, and that article helped introduce into public discourse the terms of Mr. Harrington's thesis.

Thus it was by a kind of literary accident, an accident of publicity, even, that the phrase, "the other America," passed into the current language, a pendant and corrective to Mr. Galbraith's "affluent society." And with the phrase came a new public concern about the human misery that is a regular and necessary feature of the way we live now—misery on the grand scale, but so obscured by a trick of social optics that it took unusual gifts of heart and mind to discern it at all. But men aspire to do better than they do; in the few years since the publication of *The Other America*, much legislation and public discussion have been dedicated to the problems of American poverty. However inadequate the measures, however inconclusive the discussion, they do represent a moral advance over silence and inaction, and the credit is largely Mr. Harrington's.

Now he is known. It is unlikely that his new book will go unnoticed. A very good thing, since *The Accidental Century* is as original a work as *The Other America*, much broader in scope, far more ambitious intellectually. Indeed, the book sets out to draw a moral psychological, and social portrait of this age of crisis, offering political predictions and even the outlines of political solutions.

Partly because of his candid and persuasive manner, and partly because of his undogmatic openness, Mr. Harrington must often appear to the sympathetic reader as someone who has ordered and systematized the reader's own thoughts, or at least his more presentable ones. That is a great advantage to a polemicist interested in accomplishing a deliberate revolution. At the same time, from the point of view of literary glory, Mr. Harringon suffers a real disadvantage when he rehearses significant ideas with an air of sweet reason that makes them seem wholly familiar ground. It takes, on the reader's part, an act of imagination that bears some proportion to the author's in order to recognize what a feat has been accomplished—a marshalling of the humane intuitions of the age, offered in a way that persuades us to move toward humane political action.

A double focus, two complementary themes, are at the base of Mr. Harrington's analysis. First, he suggests that the revolutionary dynamism of the capitalist system and its accompanying technology has produced, and is producing, unplanned, unlooked-for, and well-nigh unbearable social strains—the paradox being that a system minutely planned and rationalized in its details is yet a colossal accident in its gross outlines. Secondly, the moral and psychological effect of the system is to induce a complex mood of decadence, and to invest art, manners, and philosophy with the peculiar grandeurs and servitudes of a lapsarian spirit of doom. "There died a myriad/And of the best, among them/For an old bitch gone in the teeth/For a botched civilization."

Mr. Harrington remarks the fact that our decadence sometimes deserves to be called magnificent, particularly in the arts, where the uncertainty and terror of the age have been translated into profoundly original works. He devotes an entire section to Thomas Mann, as the focus and examplar of contradictory pressures in this century, and he gives more than passing attention to Joyce, Proust, and Malraux.

But if in literature our "Bad Eminence" has sometimes had lightnings flashing about its head, the social and political aspects of decadence are less inspiring. Capitalism itself, according to Mr. Harrington, is in a period of cold decadence, when the spectacle of mindless power seems to drain the virtue from the mores and habits of thought that made its early conquests possible. Indeed, it has produced, in place of the old proletarian, a new kind of mass-man who cannot supply the needed pressure for social reform, so that Mr. Harrington, paraphrasing William James, is led to seek a moral equivalent for poverty. His point here, of course, is that the working-class of the industrial West could once quite reasonably be held to be the progress-bearing element of the social order, whereas, now, insofar as the working-class is self-conscious, it is organized into unions that are simply necessary features of the late-capitalist economy.

Aside from the distaste that a man of sensibility must feel for a society that is at once frivolous and compulsive, hard-hearted and self-indulgent, powerful and aimless, the probability of breakdown in the near future, or else the imposition of a suave tyranny, lends urgency to Mr. Harrington's dissent. That is, atomic war and automation are two forces that the capitalist decadence has created but cannot control. The present order is necessarily unstable, and the readiest choices for our leaderless mass-society involve annihilation or the extinction of democratic hopes. "Consequently I rejoice," Mr. Harrington says in effect, preferring to look upon our decadence not simply as a fateful falling-off, but as the occasion

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and opportunity for renascence.

In order to plan for a revolution that will arrest and re-direct the accidental one that is upon us, Mr. Harrington needs, not mass-men, but full-scale human beings. Accordingly, he is led to analyze such aspects of conservative or elitist theory as are exemplified by Ortega y Gasset, and which have become the common coin of speculation about the baseness of the masses and the dim prospects for any polity that fails to keep them in their place. In brief, Mr. Harrington suggests that it ill becomes the framers and beneficiaries of a culture that debauches the masses, to deplore the low habits of the helotry.

The fact that democratic hopes have been frustrated by a late stage of the very capitalist ideology and technology that once encouraged them, eludes the contemners of the masses; they do not see those masses and their own notions of them as historically specific phenomena, but appeal instead to the nature of things, and the inevitable stupidity, venality, and vulgarity of other people. The theme is so widespread that it may be taken as the hallmark of the ideological decadence that has accompanied the artistic and political ones. It is of the first importance that Mr. Harrington has identified and examined its self-serving arguments.

Mr. Harrington, after appropriate disclaimers, mentions the dread word, Socialism. He knows there is much to disclaim—from the voting of war credits by Socialist deputies in 1914 to the very latest un-Socialist activities of Russia, China, and Great Britain. His point is, precisely, that those failings are un-Socialist. He gives reasonable arguments for holding that tyranny and bureaucracy, far from being inseparable from Socialism, are characteristic rather of insufficiently Socialist systems, and that if public control of the means of production is no sufficient condition for a humane polity, it is most certainly the minimum condition therefor.

Provided always, that is, that the public is a group of citizens upon whom a certain amount of social tenderness has been expended, in the form of education, leisure, physical security, and political liberty. Based on such a public, Socialism could convert the threat of universal unemployment resulting from automation—with the benefits going to the controlling class, and bread and circuses for the plebs—to the promise of a polity of leisured citizens, educated to the point where they might take an intelligent interest in their fate.

Mr. Harrington thinks that the every way desirable goal might be achieved through the instrumentality of what he is pleased to call the left wing of the Democratic Party. That is an amiable weakness on the part of a practical politician, who needs to know where the existing power is, so that he may lay hands on it. But Mr. Harrington is not merely a practical politician; he is also a student of political economy, and from the viewpoint of that science his suggestion is less excusable.

The fact is that Mr. Harrington has two levels as a thinker, the inspired and the impertinent—even as he has two levels as a writer, the eloquent and the slipshod. For example, an odd coinage occurs several times in this book: "By far and away," a phrase that confounds three separate idioms—"by far," "by and large," "far and away." Is it some analogous trick of mistaken eclecticism that leads him to picture the rump of the Democratic donkey as a fitting charger for the champion of Socialism? In any case, it is for Mr. Harrington's admirers—and *The Accidental Century* must cause their numbers to swell—to persuade him that as he has had the uncommon courage to say, "Socialism," he must now be consistent and say, "A new left, a new party for reform."

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REVIEWERS

EMILE CAPOUYA, *a critic, contributes frequently to* The Saturday Review.

GABRIEL GERSH *writes on Middle-East affairs.*

WILLIAM JAMES SMITH, *a free-lance writer and critic, is a frequent contributor.*

JAMES KRITZECK *is a member of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton.*

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The Marsh Arabs

WILFRID THESIGER

Dutton, $6.50

GABRIEL GERSH

FIVE YEARS AGO, with *Arabian Sands,* Wilfred Thesiger confirmed as a writer the distinction he had already gained as an explorer. The book was acclaimed as a new classic af Arabian travel, ranking with the writings of Burton, Doughty and Lawrence. In *Arabian Sands* the author traversed and mapped the desert wastes of Saudi Arabia into which no European had ventured.

Long before *Arabian Sands* was published, however, the author had abandoned the exploration of the desert for journeys in a landscape that contrasted with Saudi Arabia. In southern Iraq, where the Tigris and Euphrates flow together, Mr. Thesiger found a people who, like his beloved Bedu of Saudi Arabia, were "as yet little affected by the outside world."

Here, amidst the swamps and lagoons formed by these ancient rivers, live a tribe called the Madan or Marsh Arabs, whose houses are built of reeds, whose children learn to paddle canoes before they walk, whose men spear fish in waterways lined with tall, blonde, waving rushes. A few foreigners have established tenuous contact with these marshmen for the sake of hunting. But no Christian, and probably no outsider from Baghdad or Basra, had ever lived among the Madan.

If readers already are familiar with their way of life, it is because Gavin Maxwell published in 1957 *A Reed Shaken by the Wind,* an account of his visit to the Marshes. This would have been impossible without the help of Mr. Thesiger, who showed his guest round the vast area. Yet Mr. Maxwell's book, however intelligent, only foreshadowed Mr. Thesiger's masterpiece. The latter book springs from incomparably deeper knowledge, for the author lived with the Madan, among whom he became a legend.

When Mr. Thesiger first expressed his intention to settle among these people, the son of a sheikh protested in amazement at such European eccentricity. "The Madan," he said, "live like their buffaloes. Their houses are half under water, filled with mosquitoes and flies. If you try to sleep in one of them, you will probably get your face trodden by buffaloes during the night. The Madan are poor people; they have no proper food; rice and milk are all they eat."

What endeared him to the tribesmen was his skill as an amateur surgeon and doctor. He travelled from village to village, helping the sick afflicted with bilharzia, ophthalmia, dysentery and other diseases. He made his reputation by treating these cases with antibiotics and by circumcising their boys by the hundreds. ("I had never done this operation, but had watched many in hospitals and among the tribes.")

Such labors left him with a "deep sense of accomplishment," for despite his toughness, he could not help being touched by the affection he won. In February, 1953, for instance, he returned to the Marshes after an absence of seven months. "In that time," he writes, "I had crossed high passes through the snows of the Hindu Kush to the cold blue lake of Korombar, where the Chitral river rises; I had looked out over Wakand from the Borogil Pass, and seen in the distance a glint that was the Oxus; I had slept on the glaciers at the foot of Tirich Mir, and in the dark, verminous houses among mulberry orchards, where the last black Kafirs lived on the borders of Nuristan. Now, back once more in

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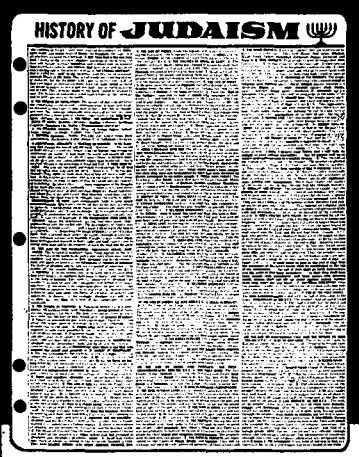

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Falih's *mudhif* on the edge of the Marshes, I felt that I had come home." His hosts felt the same.

The author's adaptation to their way of life never implied any attempt to pass himself off as an Arab and he despises those Europeans who wear Arab costume for any reason but practical convenience. Nor does the author see the Marshmen through a romantic haze. Unlike many Europeans attracted by Arab life, he does not rhapsodize or argue for the superiority of simple tribesmen to complex Westerners, though he does more than once contrast them favorably with the Westernized Iraqi politicians and officials who are the sheikhs' nominal overlords.

Having made it clear that he does not like cars, airplanes, radio and television, and that he welcomed his escape to an area where these were not available, he does not suggest their absence creates a paradise. He found some of the sheikhs discourteous, some of the villagers mean, some of the food unpalatable, some of the neglect of sanitation disgusting. Despite these criticisms, he was sufficiently in love with their life to return year after year.

Mr. Thesiger, whose brief passages on the history of Mesopotamia are as concise as they are clear, has really been exploring a remote past, strangely preserved from the inroads of modern or mechanical devices, except the rifle. He believes that this way of life is doomed to disappear very soon with the inevitable draining of the marshes —the march of that progress which the romantic in him so strongly abhors.

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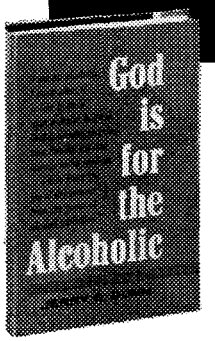

by Jerry G. Dunn

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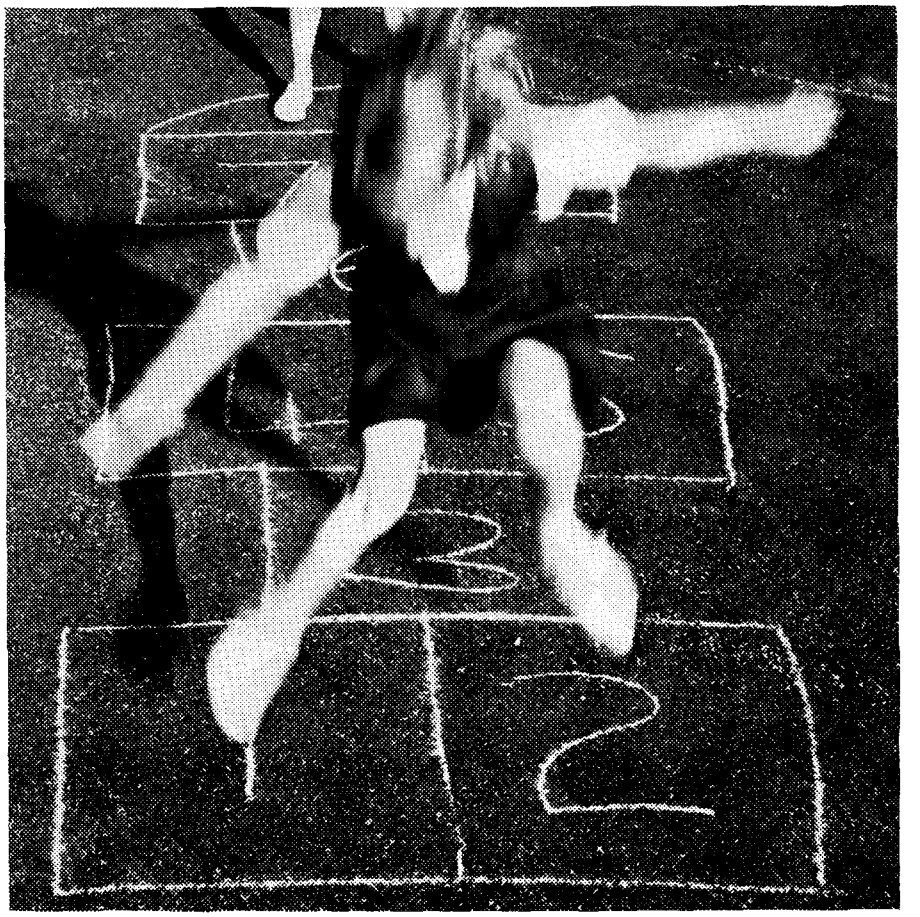
are currently flooded with Zonk! articles written, putatively, in the manner of Wolfe and, by common account, uniformly impossible.

Oddly enough, none of his parodists —and even fewer of his emulators—has successfully captured much of the flavor of Wolfe. On the surface he seems a natural for the imitator—exclamation, aporia, ellipsis, neologism, the esoteric vocabulary, the wild comparison—but somehow the imitations never quite come off. They go too far or they do not go far enough. Most of them, in the fashion of parodies, go too far, but even the best fall short in peculiar way —they miss the spark of personality that is more arresting than the funny punctuation. Wolfe has it, that magical quality that marks prose as distinctively one's own. It is not just a matter of tricks.

Few writers, even among the best, find a unique voice, and among journalists the tendency is to blend into the common, shirt-sleeve, hat-on-the-back-of-the-head anonymity. Wolfe, at the age of thirty-two, realized that he had something special to say and his praised and excoriated style, I suspect, was merely an outgrowth of that realization. His comic, horrified, and yet affectionate, observations on the American scene have been appearing prolifically in *Esquire* and in the New York *Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine. This first book of Wolfe's is a collection of those articles and, unlike most journalistic collections, it is lively ready from start to finish.

Wolfe has a Ph.D. in "American Studies" from Yale, and whatever American Studies may be the phrase sums up his journalistic interests—Las Vegas, demolition auto racing, Murray the K, the Peppermint Lounge, Kustom Kars, Baby Jane Holzer, Cassius Clay, way-out beatniks, the art gallery gang, all the bizarre outposts of our culture and its strange spokesmen. Wolfe has a vision, not an original one perhaps but chillingly and wonderfully documented, of all these weird forces taking over, closing in, not with any particular vicious impulse but moving with a relentless, half-conscious, force—"arising,



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slippy, shiny, electric—Super Scuba-man!—out of the vinyl deeps."

Wolfe is appalled and at the same time fascinated by the sight of Super Scuba-man advancing on us. What he has done is simply to describe the brave new world of the "unconscious avant-garde" who are shaping our future, but he has described this world with a vividness and accuracy that makes it something more than real. There is something of Super Scuba-man about Wolfe himself. His voice is one that has never been heard before and the intonations are the kind that raise the hair on the back of your neck.

All new voices in writing are apt to be reprobated. The reasons for this are implicit in human nature. Tom Wolfe's *New Yorker* articles are an interesting case in point. These two articles (they do not, unfortunately, appear in the present collection) came out in the *Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine and attacked the denizens of the *New Yorker* magazine offices as "tiny giants" and "living mummies." The *New Yorker* itself shuddered visibly, Eustace Tilley dropped his monocle, and all tiny giants from J. D. Salinger on down wrote white-lipped letters of scorn to the *Herald Tribune.*

The furor was an interesting one. An upstart crow had shaken the plumage of the great bald eagle with apparently little effort or compunction—or even bad temper. The reaction was not so much to what Wolfe said as to the way he said it. Wolfe could be "heard," he had a voice that made you listen, he had a style. And it was a style that was no more a mere collection of gimmicks than, say, Whitman's was a hundred years ago when he raised a similarly raucous and self-confident voice.

It is a little early to predict whether Wolfe will develop into a major literary figure. It is hard, in fact, to decide whether what he is saying is significant in itself because of his assertiveness and his talent. Usually, however, when we say of a first book that it is promising we mean that it displays a little something that may mature, develop, establish a personality. Wolfe is promising in quite a different way. He's got it, the something that puts you in the running, makes you a contender. It's not a question of his finding his feet, he's on them, or of finding his voice or his attitudes, he's found them. It is, in fact, merely a question of production, and whether he can slip effectively over into the fictional works that he has promised. But no one who has read "The Last American Hero is Junior Johnson. Yes!" or any of the other pieces, indeed, in this collection can say that the possibility is not a hopeful one. It is too bad there is not on the current scene an Emerson to say, as he did to Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career."

I'll say it. Why not? I greet you at the beginning of a great career. Yes!

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Baal, Christ and Mohammed

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JAMES KRITZECK

Whenever historians are called upon to judge journalists, they are accustomed to do so severely and with a great measure of professional consciousness aroused by the fact, which has

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special poignancy for them, that journalism is not history. Nevertheless, once in a while a journalist proves that he can write history as well as, or better than, some historians. Mr. Cooley's book is one such case. For the first time in English, the history of civilization in North Africa is written here, by the distinguished correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*, with all the hard coin and delicate vision often missing in historians' work.

Baal, Christ and Mohammed is a captivating book and, especially considering that its subject extends from Baal to Bourguiba, a superb achievement. Moreover, it impresses one as a fervent book, one which its author passionately wished and worked hard to write, and one in which his special interests are discernible but all trace of personal bias is absent.

Neither the title of the book nor its subtitle, "Religion and Revolution in North Africa," are mere catchy conjunctions. Mr. Cooley's focus is sharply upon the cultural force of religion throughout the history of North Africa. It emerges from his study that such a focus provides us with a uniquely illuminating method of ordering and understanding the masses of unwieldy facts which make up the long, checkered history of that region.

The chapters which fill the greatest gaps in our general knowledge are those which discuss the Punic religion and the complex religious life of the late classical and early medieval periods, from the introduction of Christianity to the Islamic conquest. But the most stunning chapters, in the opinion of this reviewer, are those concerning the revolutionary missiological ideas and techniques of Cardinal Lavigerie and Charles de Foucauld.

It has been a long, long time since the diocese of Hippo was, on account of one of its bishops, a central diocese in Christendom; but its history, reflected in that of its surrounding areas as well, tells of modes of living within the City of God in which today's Christians may discover the same mystery and promise which has always been their daily bread.

The Education of Catholic Girls

JANET ERSKINE STUART

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DOROTHY HUNT

When Newman Press decided to publish Mother Stuart's half-century-old educational treatise, they were undoubtedly aware of the multiple risks involved.

Such daring may be misinterpreted as the intelligent decision of those "bright young men who want to go back to 1910 . . . and start the First World War all over again. . . ." The book could so easily be regarded, Mother Kathryn Sullivan's preface notwithstanding, as obsolescent and even, to quote an anonymous critic of the Xavier Plan, as a magnificent educational blueprint—for 1347.

This is not the case. Rather, the timelessness of *The Education of Catholic Girls* obtrudes in almost every chapter. As a "Catholic girl" who has supposedly been "educated," I can only

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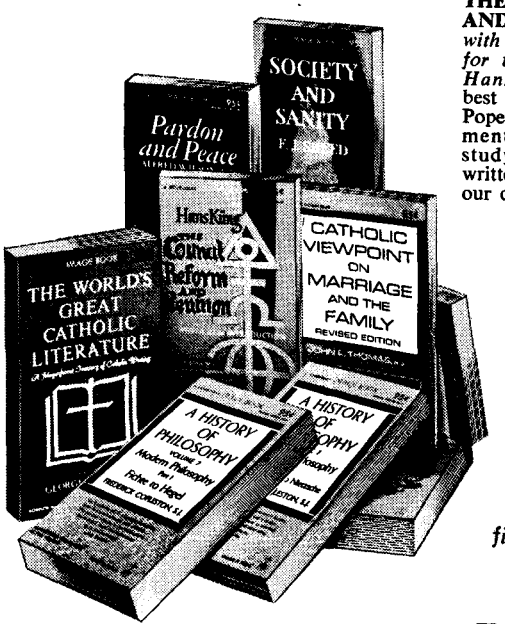
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regret at least two-thirds of my own education, and wish in vain that my teachers had had Mother Stuart's book.

One of the book's most important ideas was not, so far as I know, utilized in my own schooling: the idea that, intellectually, girls just don't have it. (Since I am a girl, I do not attempt here to approximate the author's thought, *a fortiori* her diction.) "Experimental science taught in laboratories," for instance, fails to reach the "mental defects" of girls, and ought to be abandoned for something more fitting, like "household hygiene."

"Generally," the female mind is inferior to the male intelligence, "if only on the ground that the strain of equal studies is too great for the weaker physical organization." (If I had only known in grappling with parabolic curves that the cause of my flagging health—which my mother so unwittingly diagnosed as all in my mind—lay not in my aptitude, nor in my diligence, nor in my acumen, but in my sex, I could have dropped the course without a qualm.) As for the "more advanced studies of natural science [which] open up burning questions," we girls must remember that here we "have no right to have any opinion at all." As I say, if I had only known; I might then have remembered.

Another singular service this book renders is to dispel those distressingly modern doubts that Catholic education may not yet be ready to establish its schools in the New Jerusalem. We learn on the first page that only Catholics really know what they want to teach. Later we discover that, "although no one can be educated by maxim and precept," we would still do well to recall the maxim that "Catholic family life, Catholic citizenship, Catholic patriotism are the truest, the only really true, because the only types of these virtues that are founded on truth." How reassuring, in these times of ecclesiastical uncertainties, to be told that the history of the Church is central to the correct teaching of modern history.

How uplifting to be reminded that the study of music is invaluable in assisting the educated Catholic girl to climb her educated way to the choir loft; that needlework, "the fundamental handicraft of women," enables the educated Catholic girl to put herself at the service of the Church, "in which there is room for every capacity, from the hemming of the humblest *lavabo* towel to priceless works of art embroidered by queens for the popes and bishops of their time."

Lest any educated Catholic girl have any question about her place in the Church and in the world, she need only pick up Mother Stuart's book to realize that she was made to staff "a nursery of the kingdom of heaven," to invoke St. Zita, to pray the kitchen prayer. "When girls have, by themselves, brought to a happy conclusion the preparation of a complete meal, their very faces bear witness to the educational value of the success. They are not elated nor excited, but wear the look of quiet contentment which seems to come from contact with primitive things. This look alone on a girl's face gives a beauty of its own, something becoming, and fitting, and full of promise. No expression is equal to it

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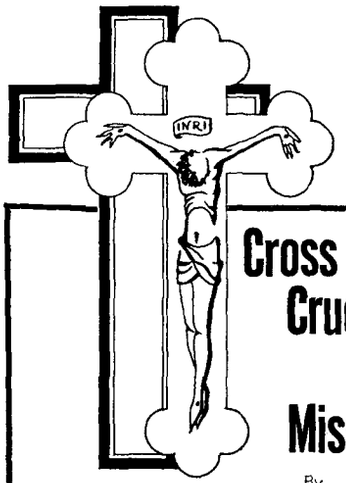

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in the truest charm, for quiet contentment is the atmosphere which in the future, whatever may be her lot, ought to be diffused by her presence, an atmosphere of security and rest." Catholic girls are contented girls.

As I say, if I had only known, I could have told my friends. If I had gotten to them sooner, they might have become more educated, more Catholic, more girlish. Now I have to write them letters, in hope that it may not be too late, and brood over my misspent educational past. Still, since I am an educated Catholic girl with a staunch Catholic character, God will give me the grace to go on. Excuse me, while in an atmosphere of security and rest, I contentedly thread my needle.

CORRESPONDENCE

(*Continued from page 649*)

Of course, some liturgical symbols have perhaps become less telling as their material elements have become less a part of modern life; but has modern man any less need of food and drink than had his forebears? Ought the family to mean less to man today than heretofore? Besides, the community of man has a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension, and symbols borrowed from man's past, though they must seem to twentieth-century man a bit contrived, are nonetheless reminders of this dimension, which living man persistently tends to overlook, and, in overlooking, loses something of himself.

Moreover, I suspect that had Father Ryan not lumped together indiscriminately elements of the present liturgy that are of Gallican or medieval origin —whose authors may well have been relatively close to barbarism — with those of Roman provenance—after all, many Romans were highly civilized by anybody's standards — his indictment would have lost much of its bite. And many students have already suggested that further restoration of the original Roman structure would be desirable. . . .

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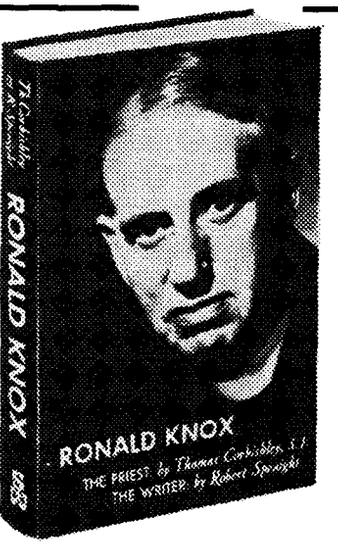

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